WRL News

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Feminist Organizing in the Peace Movement:

The Role of Women's Actions

In the fall of 1983 the New York City WRL Local sponsored a forum on women's pacifist actions. As Carol Livingston, from the Local, noted in her opening remarks, "In our discussions about this evening we found something which we'd like to forestall right now. This evening is not a forum on the subject of feminism. Feminism is part and parcel of our pacifism. As pacifists we feel that we are against oppressions of peoples. We are anti-racist, we are anti-colonialist, we are anti-sexist and that is not a subject that is open for debate. But, within that context there has been a good deal of interest and feeling about women's actions, more recently, of course, because of actions such as the Seneca Women's Encampment, the Women's Pentagon Action and Greenham Common and these are open questions among a lot of people and among many has opened a strong wave of feeling. We want to emphasize that this is a discussion. We don't feel it as a debate. Within our capitalist, patriarchal, individualist system it is very easy to fall into the limitation of polarized thinking, of thinking that, if I have an idea and you don't agree with it we must be opposed. So we have all sorts of slogans like kill or be killed, and better dead than red, either/or as if there can only be two sides to an issue. What we hope tonight is to be able to make this a forum to widen that space, to hear people who come from all different starting points speak about the paths that they see toward getting to a goal which is, we think, a common goal."

The two articles that follow are the opening remarks made by Norma Becker and Grace Paley. It should be noted that Norma was asked in advance by the Guardian *newspaper if they could publish her remarks, and so she had written them out in article format. Grace's remarks are transcribed from the tape.*

By Norma Becker

The feminist world outlook is not monolithic. There are, as it is important to remember, multiple conceptions of what feminism means. It is important to underscore the fact that when we speak of feminism, we are talking about an ideology that encompasses a range of different—and sometimes conflicting—organizing styles. We are speaking as well of a diversity of analyses and a spectrum of attitudes and interests. These analyses and attitudes reflect existential differences among women in class, race, religion, ethnic background and age. The ramifications of this reality confirm the assertion that there is no one model of feminist organizing.

Consequently, I believe that we need to debate feminist perspectives on organizing in the peace movement. Certainly the recent tensions that have surfaced around this issue indicate that dialogue is badly needed.

It seems terribly important to me that we avoid a doctrinaire approach to this issue, an approach that tends to project a feminist orthodoxy and urges adherence to one particular body of theory and practice that its followers define as feminism. We need to remind ourselves constantly that "unity in diversity" is not only possible, but desirable.

We should note that the phenomenon of women banding together to take action in public affairs is older than the peace movement. In many pre-state cultures, women played the role of peacemakers. And since the inception of the peace movement, women have always felt drawn to work together as women.

Why then, are there tensions today? What elements in a new style of women's organizing have recently evoked controversy and conflict in the peace movement?

These elements are perceived in women-only actions which manifest, to a greater or lesser degree an anti-male attitude and a separatist tone. Some of the components of this tone include an inclination to define feminism as exclusively female, and, conversely, to identify "machismo" as exclusively male. Maleness is then defined as a social evil.

There is also a tendency to view men as essentially oppressors, while there is an aversion to acknowledging that they, too, can be victims. There is an adamant, frequently hostile, rejection of men or boys, along with the use of separatist vocabulary like "women only" or "womanspace." There is a drift toward the creation of a feminist orthodoxy in regard to group process. Specific methods like consensus, the lack of leaders, or small groups are extolled as sacrosanct. There is, further, the subordination of political themes to lifestyle preferences and personal interests.

continued on page 7

By Grace Paley

When I thought about talking here with Norma tonight, and we all agreed that we really didn't want to debate because we didn't like the way debates are formed and besides, we've often been on each others side in the course of our lives and we will be again. And I also thought about what I would say and I thought basically that I would say just a couple of things, and I want to say these before I really answer Norma.

The first thing that I wanted to say about women organizing as women, with women, is really not something, as far as I'm concerned, that *can* be discussed. I mean that it is, it exists. Women *have* organized. Autonomously. It's plain fact. If we think about whether it should or should not be done, we're immediately falling into a kind of organizational trap. Because what we have, what we see in the organizing of women, by women, with women, with their peculiar processes and all, which are, really, not so strange—related to Quaker meetings and consciousness-raising group experience. I have to say that I remember once, after a very long meeting that went until about 3 o'clock in the morning, while we were moving heavily through this process, somebody said to me, "How can you stand this, it's going on and on?" And I said, "Yeah, its hard." And then I remembered, of course, coalition meetings I'd gone to

continued on page 8

Four Days In Malta—Peace and Liberation

By David Reynolds

I hope the tragedy of the Libyan/British Embassy seige has ended peacefully by the time this reaches you, but the shooting of a number of persons in London on April 17 by someone inside the Libyan Embassy has caused a sudden new surge of anti-Libyan sentiment. This brings back memories of charges of over a year ago that the Libyans had sent a "hit team" into the U.S. to gun down Reagan. And it makes more current the discussions I had with a number of Libyans at a conference in Malta, March 14-18.

I was one of eleven persons from the U.S. at what had been billed as the "First International Conference of Peace-Liberation and Alternative Movements." There were a total of 170 of us from 60 nations. The conference was hosted by the Malta Peace Lab, a Catholic-oriented project about which I had known nothing before getting the invitation. The list of those invited was drawn up jointly by the Austrian Society for North-South Relations and the Malta Peace Lab which, in turn, seems to have relied heavily on the Libyans for suggestions. My understanding, after talking with the conference organizers, was that the air fares for the Americans and the Europeans were paid by the Austrian Society with some private help from West Germans, and the fares for those from Africa, Asia, and Latin America were paid by the Malta Peace Lab—which certainly would have had to have help from somewhere, and that somewhere was, I believe, Libya. (The Libyans have, despite some squabbles with Malta about off-shore oil, invested something like $100,000,000 in the Maltese economy, which is a great deal for a society of about 350,000).

The intent of the conference was excellent—to bring together the peace and alternative movements from the North, with the liberation movements from the South. And the conference was exciting and useful. Phil Berrigan and Ernesto Cardenal debated violence and nonviolence, a few of us sat up until the early hours of the morning talking to the Libyans, there was a chance for informal meetings with people from Africa, Asia, and Central America.

The conference was charming because of its odd political composition. Everyone who was present felt, of course, that their own invitation had been correct (a matter on which I am not totally convinced) but almost everyone realized there were serious gaps. The liberation movements did not include any of the genuine non-violent movements, such as that in the Philippines. The Libyan wing of the PLO was present but not Arafat's people. And there were oddities—a former President of Hungary (not a dissident), two representatives of the Afghanistan resistance, an Iraqi based in East Berlin, an East German peace worker who was expelled and now lives in West Berlin, two Polish church workers, etc. Clearly, however, there were gaps in the representatives from each country. The U.S. had War Resisters League, the Freeze, Mobilization for Survival, the Socialist Party, Fast for Life, the International Seminars for Training on Nonviolent Action, Greenpeace, and independents including Dan Ellsberg, Phil Berrigan, and two native Americans.

Ernesto Cardenal at tree planting ceremony during Malta Conference.
Photo by David McReynolds.

I sensed that the Europeans, who were fairly vocal about there being too much Libyan influence (and then failed to engage in direct dialogue with the Libyans) and uneasy about the invitations being unbalanced, were also a little uneasy with the conference because it was pulled together by the Mediterranean countries—Italy, Spain, Malta, and Libya. Certainly it was refreshing to me to get out of the "East/West" bind of U.S. thinking and find myself in a situation where delegates were applauding both the speakers from Afghanistan and those from Nicaragua.

For me personally the greatest lesson was a reminder of how little I know, something which, at 54, I am always reluctant to admit. I didn't even know where Malta was until shortly before I left. And I had never really had an encounter with the Moslem world, its sharply differing attitudes toward women, toward nonviolence, toward authority. We were housed not in the simple surroundings we had thought the Malta Peace Lab would offer, but in the luxury of a first class Libyan-owned hotel where, as we entered for registration, we were confronted with a table piled with Col. Muammar Qadhafi's "Green Book" and a great deal of other material from Libya (and where, I add, we could all place the material *we* had brought, and where I placed a load of WRL material). I took the Green Book home with me—it is good to find out what a stranger is saying before you decide who is the enemy and who is the friend. And when I got home I bought a copy of the Koran, realizing it is past time that I learn something about Islamic culture.

Any conference which can bring together so wide a range of views has value. While a continuations committee was kept in place—with the power to co-opt to its ranks—it is uncertain if there will be a *second* conference of this kind, or whether the grouping that was involved will find it possible to work through existing groups such as the International Peace Bureau or the West European based International Peace Communication and Coordination Center.

Rather than be frightened of the Libyans, which was the reaction of a number of those from the West, should we not welcome the fact that revolutionary movements, including the Libyans, are interested in dialogue with the nonviolent movements? And isn't there a fundamental truth in the proposition that the liberation movements must become peace movements, since the superpowers can turn their interventions into oppressions, and the sturcture of the huge blocs is most oppressive to the Third World, while the peace movements must become liberation movements, knowing that peace without justice is not only morally indefensible but also very unlikely, since the oppressed so rarely cooperate over a long period of time without resistance? Peace and liberation—my hunch is that one is not likely without the other.

David McReynolds is a WRL national staff member.

Pastor Martin Niemoller Dies

Pastor Martin Niemoller, a U-Boat commander in World War I, and originally an early supporter of Hitler, went into opposition to Hitler and became a leading clerical opponent of the Nazi regime. He was jailed for eight years in Sachsenhausen and Dachau, and was awaiting execution when American soldiers freed him in 1945. He is probably most known for the following description of his experiences in Nazi Germany: "In Germany they first came for the Communists and I did not speak up because I wasn't a Communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew. Then they came for the trade unionists and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist. Then they came for the Catholics and I didn't speak up because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me and by that time no one was left to speak up."

Pastor Niemoller was active for many years both in the German section of the War Resisters Internation and on the Council of the War Resisters International. He died peacefully at his home in Wiesbaden, West Germany on March 6 at the age of 92.

LOCAL ORGANIZING: *THE ULTIMATE "WEAPON"*

By Grace Hane Hedemann

Can you imagine the following situation...

It was snowing heavily in Great Falls last March 19 when David Bissinger heard on the evening news that President Reagan was going to make his only campaign stop in Montana at Malmstrom Air Force Base. Though the visit was three days away, David knew it was essential to organize a demonstration, despite the awful weather.

However, David had a problem—he only knew five people who might participate, he didn't know how to write a leaflet, he didn't know how to alert the media, he didn't know if he would be arrested, and he didn't have money to pay for all the expenses.

Fortunately, all was not lost because he called Dannia Carter, a local organizer in Great Falls. Dannia was the key. She had been to a WRL training program for organizers, had a copy of the WRL Organizer's Manual, *and had many contacts in town. An emergency meeting of the Great Falls local group was called that evening. Ten people showed. After an hour's discussion, a scenario was developed. Pat agreed to draft the leaflet. Ralph would do the posters. Dorie took responsibility for designing, pasting up, and getting the leaflet printed. Karl would issue a press release and make sure it got delivered to the media the next day. Sylvia would check out the legalities of the action and line up lawyers to be observers. Dannia would start up the telephone tree to other Great Falls groups. And Lisa knew some college professors who could be approached to contribute $25 each to pay for expenses.*

This is a success story that could happen to you. Local organizing creates an opportunity to educate ourselves and others, to act on our convictions, and to apply public pressure to national policies. Collective thought allows ideas to be shared, refined and bounced off others, creating an energizing spirit towards collective action. Local organizing provides support and encouragement to express our personal beliefs—representing the best of the American democratic tradition.

Most American communities no longer have town meetings to debate issues and confront policies whether local or national. But through local organizing League mem-

continued on page 4

Grace Hane Hedemann is a WRL national staff member.

Northcoast WRL sit-in at Marine Recruiters office in Eureka, California on November 15, 1983. Topic of discussion was the use of marines in Grenada and Lebanon.

Local Formation

A WRL local group is composed of 5 or more WRL members who meet on a regular basis, organize projects, work in coalition, and operate as a WRL identified community organization.

The WRL national office can help by...

- putting you in contact with League members in your area.
- providing local organizing tips in Key List mailings and in the WRL News.
- providing WRL literature at a discount.
- giving representation on the National Committee.
- visiting once a year.
- free access to audio-visuals in stock.
- providing special organizing problem solving by phone and mail.
- Training Program scholarship fund.
- assisting and participating in retreat weekends.
- promoting "special" house meetings.
- publicizing group's existence.
- referring new members to group.
- providing speakers and new resources.

Houston Nonviolent Action/WRL vigil at the U.S. Federal Building to protest Pershing and cruise missile deployment in December 2, 1983. Over 100 people demonstrated for three hours. Photo by Bob Henschen.

Local Organizing *continued from page 3*

Pocatello WRL witnessed against the White Train (pictured), which carries nuclear weapons through the western states to Washington. Photo by Jürgen Grefe.

bers find a forum to debate, confront and change public policies. As part of a national network, we are strengthened by knowing others share our opinions across the country. And we have resources available to help members.

At present the League has 19 local groups, 3 regional offices and several contacts (former WRL local organizers, staff or National Committee members working in communities without local group possibilities presently). The membership has doubled to 17,000 in just three years. Partly because of this, there are many people who have little or no organizing experience. In fact, in many cases WRL is the first political organization these individuals have joined. WRL recognizes these new members need greater personal support and resources to encourage local activism. The first step is often the hardest in doing local organizing, especially confronting head on political opposition.

So, to deal with these considerations and to emphasize the importance of commitment *and* activism, WRL has expanded its Local Organizing and Membership Outreach Program. I have been assigned by the National Committee to work full time on building this program as well as continue to do media liaison work. Promoting local organizing has been a key part of the national office program since 1969. However, with the end of the Vietnam War, the demand of other issues reduced time being put into local organizing promotion. Now the League is moving full steam ahead to improve new membership services, develop national leaflets, strengthen existing locals, encourage new locals, and develop better coordination between the national and regional offices (WRL/West, WRL/Southeast and WRL/New England).

The Reagan Administration has taken its toll on our society from an escalating military budget to deeper involvement in Central America, and an abridgement of civil liberties at home, while demanding democratic rights in other countries. Each and every one of us must voice our opposition beyond just voting. There are things you can do whether part of a WRL local group or not.

First, encourage your family, friends and co-workers to join the League (order a WRL Membership Building Kit). Second, share WRL literature (e.g., "Closer to Midnight" analysis) with others at school, in community groups, etc. Third, distribute the upcoming WRL national leaflets by posting them on community bulletin boards, leafleting on your lunch hour, running them as "letters to the editor," or making them available at community events. These leaflets can be easily duplicated locally or ordered from the national office at cost, plus postage. The first leaflet will be on a pacifist response to Central America. Fourth, organize speaking engagements for WRL staff, National Committee and League members in your area. Fifth, order and read the *WRL Organizer's Manual* ($8, plus $1 postage). Sixth, join the WRL Key List. For $15 a year, you'll receive excellent monthly mailings on activities and resources. Seventh, organize a WRL members' house meeting to explore the possibility of starting a WRL Local in your community. I'll be glad to help by writing and mailing an announcement, and investigating whether a WRL activist lives in your area who could attend. Eighth, keep signing those petitions, and pressuring your Congressional representative. We're all in this for the long haul.

Coalition for Justice in El Salvador sit-in at Senators Dan Quayle and Richard Lugar's office in Evansville, Indiana. Evansville WRL represented by Clark Field protested U.S. military involvement in Central America on Tax Day, April 16, 1984.

I want to join the Local Organizing and Membership Outreach Program. Please send me the following:

- ☐ WRL Membership Building Kit.
- ☐ WRL Organizer's Manual. I have enclosed $9 to cover printing and postage.
- ☐ WRL Key List mailings. I have enclosed $15 to cover 1 year expenses for postage and printing.
- ☐ Updated and shortened "Closer to Midnight." I have enclosed _____ ( ) for _____ copies. ($15/100).
- ☐ I am interested in organizing a house meeting.
- ☐ I would be willing to organize a WRL speaker's tour in my area.
- ☐ I am interested in starting a WRL local.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone ( ) _____

Membership Building and Outreach

The WRL national office can help by...

- providing new WRL Membership Building Kit.
- printing national leaflets 3 to 4 times a year.
- updating general membership literature.
- maintain comprehensive literature service.
- assisting with house meetings.
- providing speakers.

WRL NEWS

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WRL Statement of Purpose

The War Resisters League affirms that war is a crime against humanity. We therefore are determined not to support any kind of war, international or civil, and to strive nonviolently for the removal of all causes of war.

I support this statement and wish to enroll as a member of the War Resisters League.

Signature _____

Name _____

Address _____

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WRL National Committee Sets Program Priorities

By Linnea Capps

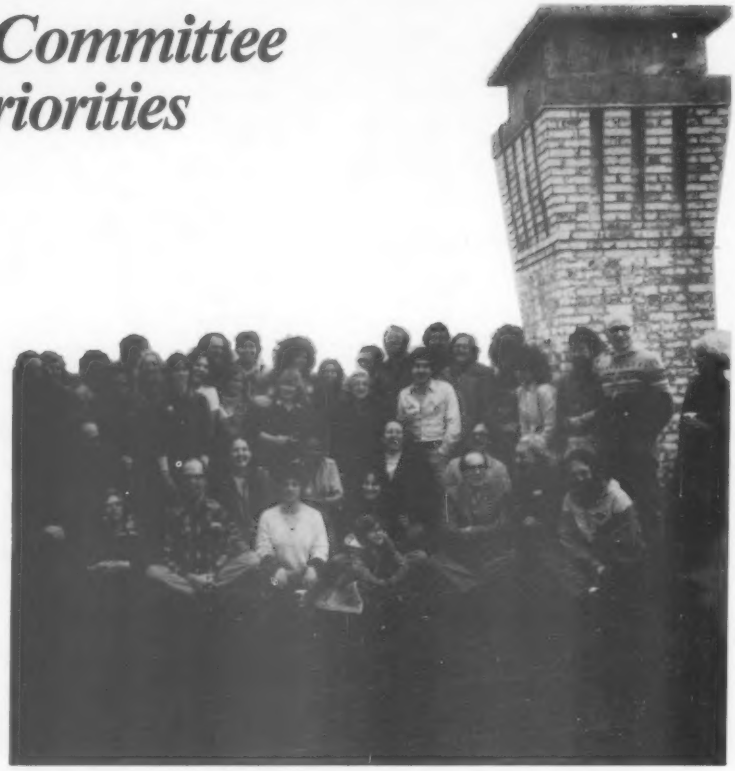
For members of the WRL National Committee, "Presidents Day" weekend meant spending nearly 22-hours in meetings. The deliberations began with a Friday evening discussion on "How will WRL relate to the 1984 presidential election?" Three presentations were made. The first, by Mavis Belisle of Dallas WRL, dealt with plans for actions around the Republican National Convention. The WRL local has participated in some of the planning for demonstrations, and has worked to keep militarism a key focus of the coalition. Conversely, Dorie Wilsnack of WRL/West reported that the fact that the Democratic Convention will be held in San Francisco has not affected the priorities of the regional office. A number of other groups, however, are planning demonstrations, a "people's convention," and civil disobedience. The third presentation was from executive committee member Wendy Schwartz. She outlined how the Reagan administration has substantially escalated the arms race, failed totally to meet the needs of poor and working people, has seriously eroded civil liberties and rights, and has created a disastrous foreign policy. She argued that it is crucial to vote this administration out of office and that WRL should urge its members to register and vote against Reagan.

Several people mentioned support for Jesse Jackson, and made the point that he has built an important organization with the participation of large numbers of people of color and other minorities. Although WRL doesn't agree with some of his political positions, it was suggested that dialogue with the Jackson campaign should be attempted.

Other NC members felt that it would be wrong simply to focus on defeating Reagan, that we must retain our independence and not vote for "another establishment candidate." Some felt that the presidential election could draw too much of our energy, and they urged that we not forget local issues and local elections.

One person worried that we would fall into the trap of supporting the "lesser of two evils." Another felt we missed what should have been the point of the discussion: the question should have been "How can WRL push the debate further left and make the candidates address our agenda?"

Linnea Capps is the chairwoman of the WRL.



WRL National Committee. *Photo by Karl Bissinger.*

At the end of the evening a resolution was adopted: *Given the nature of the Reagan Administration and what it represents in the areas of civil liberties, civil rights, human rights and militarism, the majority of the National Committee of the War Resisters Leagues feels that it is important for its members to register and vote against these politicies as represented by this administration.* There were 17 votes for the resolution, three against and five abstentions.

The next segment of the meeting included reports from the national and regional offices, locals and discussion of previous NC decisions. A number of new program proposals were presented and discussed. The following proposals were adopted by the NC:

- A New England regional office will be established in Norwich, Connecticut with a subsidy from the national office. It will be staffed by long-time nonviolent activists Joanne Sheehan and Rick Gaumer.

- Grace Hedemann will become the full-time coordinator of local organizing and outreach. She will both work with existing WRL locals and help set up new ones. For the last decade, local organizing was allocated less staff time.

- A half-time staff member will be hired to coordinate WRL's Central America and non-intervention programs. Reagan administration policy and events around the world necessitate an intensification of anti-intervention efforts, and WRL believes a pacifist perspective is a crucial component of these efforts.

- A new War Tax Resistance Task Force was established to intensify WRL's commitment to tax resistance as a primary tactic of war resistance. The task force will help develop WRL program and liaison with the National War Tax Resistance Coordinating Committee.

- WRL will issue a new monthly publication to replace the bi-monthly WRL *News*. It will report organizational news, offer organizing tips, publish dialogues and commentaries on important issues. A half-time staff member will be added to edit the new publication.

The National Committee recognized that these new program will significantly increase WRL's expenses. It was also felt that they were needed to keep WRL a vital, relevant, and ever-expanding organization that reflects the needs and desires of its constituency. And it was believed that the WRL membership, whose support has been unwavering for sixty-one years, will provide the additional funds needed for this essential expansion.

Feminist Organizing—Norma Becker

continued from page 1

This past summer I saw a flyer inviting women to an action. The flyer maintained, "There we will build toward a feminist future, one to replace the racist, anti-Semitic, classist and patriarchal society of our present." Many women would take exception to this statement, because they do not agree that action which excludes men should be regarded as a feminist vision of the future.

A substantial segment of the feminist community rejects the notion of a feminist future that is "women only." Instead many women envision a future where female and male relate in a framework of mutual dependence and reciprocal support, where an essential equality pervails between the sexes, each performing its tasks without arrogating to itself any special privileges or prerogatives. The goal is to create cultural formations that enable women and men to unite their efforts more to enhance what is best in the human experience.

Further on, this same flyer stated, "As women, we know all too well the connection between militarism and the violence in our lives. The masculine ideal which the military perpetuates encourages force, dominance, power and violence; it is a concept of masculinity that victimizes *women, children* and *nature*." (my emphasis). Again, a great many women regard this denial of men as victims to be incompatible with a feminist world view. The historical and intellectual inaccuracy of this position is matched by its total lack of compassion for the male victims of war, oppression and injustice.

I adhere to a perspective that holds that the bond between male and female is biological, and is found in most other animal species as well as our own. Because this bond is biologically determined, it seems to indicate that there must always be some kind of essential connection between women and men. As a species, the relationship between the sexes is fundamental and inescapable, although among individuals this does not hold true. As Simone de Beauvoir wrote, "The bond that unites women to her oppressor is not comparable to any other. This division of the sexes is a biological fact, not an event in human history."

Thus, unlike the class struggle, the battle between the sexes cannot be characterized as an irreconcilable antagonism or conflict. It provides a curious paradox: a world dominated by males, inbued with a macho mentality, poses a cultural threat to the survival of the species—witness the nuclear missile as the ultimate phallic symbol. On the other hand, a world without men would pose a *biological* threat to the survival of the species.

Unless we are prepared to postulate a genetic origin for masculine aggression and violence, we must look to culture as the main determinant of the masculine mystique. Whereas warfare has always been a male enterprise the analyses that seek to explain this phenomenon are antithetical. One views the development of warfare as an extension of masculine values, while the other views the development of masculine values as an extension of warfare.

This is not a frivolous disagreement. Once we affirm that the syndrome of male domination and female subordination in the human species is overwhelmingly determined by culture, then there is hope. Human beings possess the capacity to get beyond the limits imposed by cultural norms. Therefore those of us who still grope for a model of human existence that embodies the essential principles of feminism—egalitarianism, nonviolence, justice, empathy—must ultimately seek to create a community that does not reject one half of the species.

Most peace groups, unlike the women's movement, are open to everyone who shares their basic goals. I think there is a significant psychological difference between situations where individual women from these groups opt to participate in women-only events and another kind of situation where the group formally sponsors actions that exclude a substantial number of its members. This, in my opinion, is often experienced as a political and personal affront to men who are comrades in the struggle. It is also felt as a violation of deeply held philosophical beliefs.

Should a feminist theory allow feminist activity to be consigned exclusively to women? I think not. Ilse Koch and Margaret Thatcher could never be my sisters. But, with all their macho limitations, Fidel Castro and Steven Biko are, nonetheless, brothers in the fight to liberate oppressed and suffering humanity.

Is it possible for mixed events and groups to adhere to feminist principles? Obviously yes. Conversely, is it possible for women-only groups and events to be anti-feminist? Obviously yes. So it is qualities other than the sexual makeup of a group that determine whether or not the group operates according to feminist principles—assuming that agreement could be reached on what such principles are.

To insist that feminist actions, by definition, can be open to women only is to institutionalize a rigid sexual segregation within the movement, and to establish a stereotype that is unpalatable to many activists.

At any rate, having expressed reservations about a particular approach to feminist organizing in the peace movement, I want to emphasize that women's organizing is, in my opinion, of paramount political and strategic importance.

The impact of women's groups and actions on the larger movement are manifold: they promote the awareness of peace/anti-militarism as women's issues within the women's constituency; they provide a base for projecting feminist perspectives into a political arena that has yet to fully extricate itself from masculine modes of conduct and analysis; they constitute a social formation that generates solidarity among women; they provide a training ground for women to develop organizing skills and they often pump enormous energy into the overall movement.

I believe that a sound political approach to feminist organizing in the peace movement would firstly recognize that the peace movement must be a mass movement, embracing women with widely differing viewpoints on every conceivable issue, from abortion to the Middle East, from fashions to food. Secondly, it would acknowledge the pluralism of both the feminist community and the larger constituency of women and make a corresponding effort to design women's actions that would reach out to the broadest possible spectrum of that constituency.

It would, in addition, recognize the greater potential of women's groups to do outreach to third world and working-class women because of the powerful psychological connection engendered by a shared female identity and experience in sexist culture.

Lastly, it would not inject lifestyle preferences and individual interests into political projects aimed at broad constituencies.

Norma Becker is a teacher, a long-time activist and former chairperson of the War Resisters League.

Grace Paley

continued from page 8

The women in this part of the movement are like the women who Kropotkin was talking about when he came back from Eastern Russia and he said that the general movement in the 1870's had disintegrated. What's amazing, he said, is the women's movement. And, of course, one of the great things about the women is that they're not looking for a "piece of their own pie." And he didn't mean that they didn't want equality. They did want to go to school and be teachers, doctors, etc. But what they wanted most was a greater opportunity to really serve the people. Opportunity to use their great power and energy for themselves and the peace and honor of the world. And that's really what I feel about the women's movement that I'm a part of. That that's what we really want to do.

Feminist Organizing—Grace Paley

continued from page 1

years ago which also went until 3 o'clock in the morning—conventional parliamentary meetings—also long, hard, but much less participatory.

So, what I want to say is that when I first began, really, to think in these feminist terms, or rather, to begin to work with women, in the peace movement, to organize the Women's Pentagon Action, I had the same extraordinary feeling that I had when, in the middle of working with the Greenwich Village Peace Center I understood that I really was a pacifist. I mean, I hadn't really known that until then. Nor had I really known a lot of pacifists. Then I discovered that I was working among a group of people who had about them a kind of fantastic truth-telling. And I hadn't seen that in all the other political groups I'd worked in. This was the first time that I really had that sense, that from now on I would always be able to speak truthfully about everything I thought. Well nearly everything.

And when I began to work with women I learned something else. I learned, in a strange way, that, in a sense, I was speaking even more truthfully about my life and other women's. I suddenly had the opportunity to really address and speak clearly and hear other women in a way I hadn't heard them inside other parts of the movement. Even inside the War Resisters League. And, as feminist as the WRL is, or feels it is, it really took a lot of suffering by a lot of people, and I really mean the suffering of a lot of people like Barbara Deming and others, who I didn't listen to at first either. I loved them. But I thought you didn't have to agree with everybody you loved. It really took a lot for this organization, which is mine too, to write down the fact that it was founded by a woman. I mean, it sounds like a very ordinary simple fact, but, you can't say you have a feminist consciousness when you keep forgetting that your organization was founded by a woman. So, I just wanted to make that small point. That, to use the word feminist again and again doesn't mean, necessarily (and I'm not being personal about this), that you really always are.

So, the first thing I wanted to say is that women organize with women, and they do it, and they don't ask anybody's permission. They didn't ask, "Should I do it? Can I do it? Is it politically right to do? May I do it?" You know. "Is it nice? Will the other organizations like me if I do it?" They did it. And that seems to me very, very important. That seems to me just its own reason, immediately. I don't have to hear more reasons than that.

The next thing I wanted to say. One of the reasons that women do organize in this way is that they have a specific analysis that addresses ancient patriarchy modes. And they maintain it even when they work with other groups. They may be women-only groups and they may have women-only meetings, but they do work within coalitions, and they go to Nicaragua marches and Middle East demos, and they make some pretty fantastic contributions. They have really brought very beautiful and brilliant things into all of these coalition demonstrations, along with their women's-only position.

There exists a different analysis—and I'm speaking for a particular group of women who make a connection among violences domestic, political, racist—who are pacifists, pretty much. (I say pretty much, because, it seems to me, *everyone's* pretty much a pacifist. I happened to have learned that from Dave McReynolds. I said that I didn't want to join the War Resisters League because I wasn't sure that I was exactly a pacifist, because sometimes, I really felt like hitting people. And he explained to me that you could be a pacifist, that is, you just *didn't* hit them. But that also, on occasion, you might. But that it wasn't a total thing.)

So—I'm speaking as a person who's been working with women's groups who have an analysis that says that patriarchy is at the bottom of an awful lot of trouble in our world. That the small boy is raised, in his little life, to a very hard life (I don't think anyone feels this isn't true). In general, to a very hard life, to become an oppressor of women, of his sisters, and frequently of his mother, and more often of his wife, and finally, of the world. Now, does this mean that I don't like my son? I do, I call him up, three times a week. You can't do more than that! But, it doesn't change my analysis of what I see is happening in this world. So that's what I would have said, in any event, those two things. One, that women ask no one's permission to organize and two, that we organize with this group in terms of a very specific analysis.

Now, as to why there are women-only meetings. I mean, this seems so elementary. Some of us here teach in a school that was once an all-women's school. So we've had this experience of an all-women's school. It wasn't organized by feminists, it was just organized to be an all-women's school, like a lot of those schools. And in that school there were all sorts of young women, who, really, many of them were quite remarkable. Now, all of a sudden we became a slightly, or a partially co-ed school. Not a lot of men, but enough. And, what happened in the beginning of this new co-educational thing was that really, as soon as there were young men in the class they were immediately the first people to raise their hands and they were the first people to do all the talking. And all of a sudden, like a year later, the newspaper was run by the boys. In the theater, the girls were the actresses, but the boys were all the directors, and that's what happened. I think we've reversed a lot of this, but not without a great deal of pain because there is a male faculty which really doesn't quite understand this and will often say (as though they're totally hopeless in the world), "I don't know what to do, the boys always have their hands up, they're always talking," as though they couldn't do anything about it. As if they couldn't just say, "Well, shut up. Give someone else a chance."

Now, a lot of the women I've worked with, especially the younger women, really come out of a movement which was very much a movement of men. Males. Have come out of a movement which, I want to say, *was* divisive and excluding. I'm really turning things on their head here—we have been called divisive. But what is more divisive than that left—whose slogans included us but whose language and organizational life left us out?

Because you invite people, because you say, oh, women are part of this meeting and they can come too, that doesn't mean that you're not excluding women. You have them there. So? Women have been around a long time. They've been going to meetings for a long time, they do this and that. They're there, but they're excluded. So a lot of women began to organize themselves into autonomous anti- militarist, sexist, racist groups and, really, it hurts to think that these women organized not in any wildly selfish way at all, but were perceived so because of what is sometimes called lifestyle. But we've been surrounded by lifestyle since 1962 or something. A lot of people 40 years old still haven't recovered from their lifestyle. So I don't see why we should be bothered by a little thing like lifestyle, which every generation has to have. The Seneca Encampment for Peace and Justice is an example of what some people think of when they say lifestyle. They may as well also say Greenham, Rocky Flats, Seabrook—any continuous, long-lasting political event that has to be lived *in*—where bathing, cooking, clothes changing, sleeping, meeting, baby care, took place—where all women were welcome and a safe place maintained for them.

So what I'm saying, really, is that it makes me sad to think that women who have organized, really, in a non-selfish way, in a way which says, "This is the best way we can work, this is the way we can be strong, and this is the way we can express the truth of our own lives and what we really believe."

continued on page 7

Grace Paley is an author, teacher and long-time activist with many organizations including the War Resisters League and the Women's Pentagon Action.